

## CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method comprising:  
providing information regarding an online auction to a computer system;  
and  
predicting, by a software program executing on the computer system, an  
auction outcome for each of a plurality of potential feedback rules  
for the online auction.
2. The method as defined in claim 1 further comprising:  
providing, by the software program, predicted auction outcomes for each  
of the plurality of potential feedback rules; and  
allowing an auction end-user to select a feedback rule to implement from  
the plurality of potential feedback rules based on the predicted  
auction outcomes.
3. The method as defined in claim 2 wherein providing predicted auction  
outcomes further comprises:  
ranking, by the software program, each of the plurality of potential  
feedback rules based on the predicted outcomes; and  
providing the ranking to the auction end-user.
4. The method as defined in claim 1 wherein predicting further comprises  
modeling an outcome for each of the plurality of potential feedback rules.
5. The method as defined in claim 4 wherein modeling the outcome for each  
of the plurality of potential feedback rules further comprises calculating a  
statistical distribution of possible outcomes for each of the plurality of potential  
feedback rules.
6. A computer system comprising:  
a processor; and

a non-volatile memory coupled to the processor and storing an auction program;

wherein the processor executes the auction program stored on the non-volatile memory and predicts an auction outcome for each of a plurality of feedback rules.

7. The computer system as defined in claim 6 wherein the processor, executing the auction program, provides an auction end-user results of the predicted auction outcomes for each of the plurality of feedback rules and allows the auction end-user to select one of the plurality of feedback rules to implement in an online auction.

8. The computer system as defined in claim 6 wherein the processor, executing the auction program, selects one of the plurality of feedback rules to implement based on the predicted auction outcomes.

9. The computer system as defined in claim 6 wherein the processor, executing the auction program, models a plurality of outcomes for an auction, one each for each of the plurality of feedback rules.

10. The computer system as defined in claim 9 wherein the processor predicts a final outcome for each of the plurality of feedback rules.

11. The computer system as defined in claim 9 wherein the processor calculates a statistical distribution of outcomes for each of the plurality of feedback rules.

12. A computer readable media storing instructions executable by a computer system, and when executed the instructions implement a method comprising:  
accepting parameters of an online auction from an auction end-user;

modeling, for each of a plurality of feedback rules, an auction outcome using, at least in part, the parameters supplied by the auction end-user; and

holding an online auction based on the parameters of the online auction and using one of the plurality of feedback rules selected based on the modeling.

13. The computer readable media as defined in claim 12 wherein holding the online auction further comprises holding an online auction using one of the plurality of feedback rules selected by the instructions executed by the computer program based on the modeling.

14. The computer readable media as defined in claim 12 wherein holding the online auction further comprises holding an online auction using one of the plurality of feedback rules selected by the auction end-user after being provided the results of the modeling.

15. The computer readable media as defined in claim 12 wherein modeling, for each of the plurality of feedback rules, the auction outcome further comprises calculating a statistical distribution of possible outcomes for each of the plurality of feedback rules.

16. The computer readable media as defined in claim 15 further comprising, before the holding step:

providing the statistical distributions of possible outcomes for each of the plurality of feedback rules to the auction end-user; and then allowing the auction end-user to select a feedback rule to implement.

17. The computer readable media as defined in claim 16 wherein the providing step further comprises:

ranking each of the plurality of feedback rules based on statistical distributions of possible outcomes; and

providing the ranking to the auction end-user.

18. A computer system comprising:
  - a means for reading and executing programs; and
  - a means for storing an auction program coupled to the means for reading and executing;wherein the means for reading and executing programs executes the auction program stored on the means for storing, and predicts an auction outcome for each of a plurality of potential feedback rules
19. The computer system as defined in claim 18 wherein the means for reading and executing programs provides an auction end-user results of the predicted auction outcomes for each of the plurality of feedback rules and allows the auction end-user to select one of the plurality of feedback rules to implement in an online auction.
20. The computer system as defined in claim 18 wherein the means for reading and executing programs selects one of the plurality of feedback rules to implement based on the predicted auction outcomes.